

# Japan's smoking rate drops to record low

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Japan's smoking rate has dropped below 20 percent for the first time, according to a new survey, as a recent rise in cigarette prices helped to further discourage the habit.

The proportion of adult smokers stood at 19.7 percent as of May, down 1.2 percentage points from a year earlier and the lowest rate since the survey started in 1965.

The number of smokers in Japan stands at about 20.6 million, according to the study published Wednesday, which is conducted by cigarette monopoly Japan Tobacco.

About 30.3 percent of [adult men](#) and 9.8 percent of adult women were smokers, it said.

The overall figures put Japan roughly on par with the United States, where the Centers for Disease Control estimates that some 18.1 percent of the adult population smokes.

The survey was conducted a month after Tokyo raised sales taxes for the first time in 17 years, pushing up the price of cigarettes, alcohol and other consumer goods.

JT said Japan's rapidly ageing population may also be playing a role in lowering [smoking rates](#), along with public health campaigns and tighter rules on where people can light up.

Many restaurants still allow smoking in Japan, although the number of non-smoking areas or outright bans is growing.

Japan's [smoking](#) rate peaked at 49.4 percent in 1966, when a record 83.7 percent of adult men and 18.0 percent of women smoked, the company said.

The rate declined in the ensuing decades, slipping below 30 percent in 2004.

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